OUR FAITH

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Prayer

Eternal Spirit, high over all blessed forever, Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, the round ocean, the living air, the blue sky, and in the mind of man, we worship Thee. In Thee we live and move and have our being, yet we apprehend Thee not. Thou art closer to us than breathing and nearer than hands and feet, and yet we understand Thee not. Thou speakest unto us in all the goodness, beauty and truth we know, and yet we debate Thy being as though birds should argue the air they live in.

O God, be not thus vague to us. Make Thyself real. Unveil our eyes. Make sensitive our hearts that we may feel. Challenge us in conscience. Allure us in ideals. Speak to us through minds that see the orderliness of Thy universe and hearts that love goodness, and grant that this day we may have an answer to our prayers: Lord, we believe, help Thou our unbelief. (H.E.F.)

Amen.

Channing's Faith in God

(From his discourse preached at the Annual Election, May 26, 1830, entitled "Spiritual Freedom")

"Without God our existence has no support, our life no aim, our improvements no permanence, our best labors no sure and enduring results, our spiritual weakness no power to lean upon, and our noblest aspirations and desires no pledge of being realized in a better state. Struggling virtue has no friend; suffering virtue no promise of victory. Take away God, and life becomes mean, and man poorer than the brute. I am accustomed to speak of the greatness of human nature; but it is great only through its parentage; great, because descended from God, because connected with a goodness and power from which it is to be enriched forever; and nothing but the consciousness of this connection can give that hope of elevation through which alone the mind is to rise to true strength and liberty."

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

(Quoted from Channing's Works, new and complete edition, published by the American Unitarian Association, 1886)

Youth Speaks for Faith in God

(From a Youth Sunday Sermon, preached in the Northampton Unitarian Church)

It (the liberal church) must be particularly careful, I think, to make clear that through freedom of belief, one can really find a personal God. Unitarians are a part of the heretical tradition of Christianity. They are justly proud of that part, and are ready to deny and to oppose vigorously what they feel is wrong. They have a religion of action, believing in man as the agent of progress, and they emphasize this fact and support it concretely with work. All this is good, but it seems to me that liberals at times lose sight of the fact that their religion can be profoundly spiritual. Outsiders see them as fighters, and, thank goodness, they are. The trouble comes when they become so busy in the combat that others cannot see that their philosophy is positive, not negative, that Unitarianism is a religion as well as a group of workers. Outsiders see that this church denies worldly spiritual authority, but they often have no conception of the power of the faith an individual can find, worshipping in fellowship with others, under the authority of his own soul.

MARTHA N. FARRAR
(Smith College '50)

Man Taking Himself for Granted!

There is a tragic aspect to man's idea of himself as self-sufficient and supreme. Lynn Harold Hough, in his book, "The Meaning of Human Experience," writes, "It is very easy for man to become so familiar with the self and its adventures that he takes them for granted." Shall we take ourselves for granted? Are we not dependent on outward stimulation for any growth we produce in ourselves or service performed for mankind? Just as surely as the tides are controlled by the moon, the growth of vegetation by the warmth of the sun and the refreshing rain, and the temperaments and habits of all of us changed by the seasons, so Man's heart and mind are conditioned according to the degree which Cosmic Consciousness penetrates to motivate mind and spirit.

It makes a great deal of difference whether a person contemplates, in moments set apart, on the idea of God (the Most High point of aspiration) or upon some earthly personality (individual or collective) or some such ideals as Supreme Ethics and Universal Democracy. The difference is between focusing one's mind and heart on a vertical ideal or a horizontal one. When we look up, our vision is not obscured and we inculcate a Universal Consciousness; but when vision is limited to a horizontal view of Man and his creations alone, then, vision is cut short and the view is of a most imperfect world of human beings groping in the dark—striving to sustain themselves without the light of God.

CARL A. SEAWARD

(Minister-Director of Christ Church and the Barnard Memorial School, Dorchester, Mass.)

What Is a Unitarian Christian?

(From the writings of William L. Sullivan)

This church has been born out of the Christian idea and ideal. Its worship and its preaching, its inner life and its outward work, bear the deep imprint of the Christian religion and the superscription of the Master who founded it.

So clear is the spiritual majesty of Jesus, so manifestly supreme His influence on human life, so illuminated with incomparable beauty the priceless treasure of His soul, that, as a congregation, we cleave to Him as the Master of our house, and wish to walk with Him in His glorious dedication to the Highest Will. We believe that no one has the right to set forth conditions of Christ's discipleship beyond those which He required Himself. If anyone had authority to say what is demanded of those who follow Him, surely it was He, and He has told us in unmistakable terms. In words as simple as sunlight He welcomed all who hoped and loved, who shrank not from sacrifice, who did the unobstrusive deed of mercy, and who had in their hearts a faithful and tender, even if sometimes a costly trust, in the Everlasting Father. That was all, and He thought it enough.

This we believe enough to constitute a Christian.

The Social Gospel

"The world's being saved will not save us; nor the world's being lost destroy us. We should look to ourselves"—CARLYLE

This doesn't sound up to date, does it? Isn't Carlyle simply expressing an idea that went out of vogue shortly after his time? How can one say that the individual's salvation is not bound up with the world's salvation? Those of us who have been so impressed with the teaching of Jesus about the brotherhood of man often look askance at such ideas. A recent editorial in Life even went so far as to say that "religion is not the brotherhood of man," that "no code of ethics is an adequate substitute for religion."

I agree that this is an overstatement. Modern journalism is so adept at overstatement. But there is a grain of truth that needs to be impressed upon our minds. The editor would have done better to say, "religion is not just the brotherhood of man." Religion is the brotherhood of man but it is also more than that. For if religion were just a good sensible system of ethics there would really be no need for much of religion as we know it today. But even sensible systems of ethics are no good unless there is a compelling power that makes people want to follow enlightened ethical systems. This is where religion enters the picture. Religion is the "elan

vital"—the life giving blood to ethical practice.

Religion, in other words, is more than just a code of ethics. Religion gives men a reason to want to be a little lower than the angels. Many men feel that the fatherhood of God is the basis. Because we are all children of God we are brothers one to another. There is a primacy about the belief in the fatherhood of God that even those who are enthusiastic about the brotherhood of man often overlook.

Therefore when we hear about the social gospel we cannot help realizing that when religion or the teachings of Jesus are applied to the social scene it does not mean just good works because we are believers in the brotherhood of man, but it also implies a religious relationship in the fatherhood of God. And this latter belief makes all the difference in the world and makes the brotherhood of man more than just a good idea.

WALTER DONALD KRING
(Minister, First Unitarian Church, Worcester, Mass.)

Christianity Today

"If any man open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." REV. 3, 20

The promise is valid for all times and places. To be a Christian is to be a strongly marked man. Other religions have suffered changes that leave them far from what they originally were. Modern Confucianism would never be recognized by Confucius, nor modern Buddhism by Gautama. Superficially the same is true of Christianity; but under surface appearances the Christian ideal is unchanged. It bids us be what he was, love what he loved, seek what he sought, and worship as he worshipped. It was he who first told us to put our new wine into new bottles; and he would be the first to recognize the need of new bottles for wine that stays continually new. To the Christian life is always fresh, newly vinted. The Christian adventure never palls. It holds the same direction, and seeks the same goal, but each day brings its own discovery and surprise. You can never mistake the true Christian, for he defies counterfeit. "There need no vows to bind whom not each other seek, but find." If a genuine Christian could be lifted out of the streets of Boston today, and put down in the streets of Capernaum nineteen centuries ago, Christ and he would find each other as infallibly as though he were Peter or John or Matthew.

CHARLES E. PARK
(Minister Emeritus, First Church of Boston, Mass.)
(From First Church Bulletin)

They Labor in Vain

In the English Channel, fourteen miles from Plymouth, stands the Eddystone Lighthouse, as familiar to the dwellers on the south coast of England as the Minot Light is to those of us who live here on the "South Shore." Round the dome of the Eddystone Lighthouse appear the words, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Those words seem to be a reference to the enduring rock on which the lighthouse is founded.

Written originally by a sage of ancient Jerusalem, the wisdom of his words seems to be crying out for a hearing today. I have just heard a radio news item about the exhibition of a "model" house. What wonders meet you in it! What conveniences and comforts! Significantly, it is called the house of science. All that science can do is here. We might hang a motto on the wall, "Science Bless Our Happy Home." God-mothered by machinery, God-fathered by technology, the more the improvements, the more the happiness of the dwellers, the more the gadgets, the more the human joy, the more the products of technology, the more abundant the life.

We have been guilty of that way of thinking. Our dream has been of a push-button heaven. We have imagined that a bountiful science multiplying gadgets would fill up the cup of human joy. We have supposed that physical comforts and conveniences would speak peace and happiness to the soul. We have thought that a band of steel, encircling the earth, all gleaming and rust-resistant, would make the world brave and new. It was a somewhat similar way of thinking, long ago, that provoked the sage to write, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

Yes, all our labor may be in vain, even

when directed by mechanical brains. For there is a difference between a house and a home, between the house of science and the home of love. A house is only a home when it is lived in. And what makes a home real is the quality of the life lived by the people who dwell in it. As the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, so the home is more than the house. All labor is in vain if it does not minister to life and its deepest needs.

The essential element is the vital element. It is the human personality that is to grow and be fulfilled. This is done by the way the people in the house live together, by the mutual courtesy and consideration they show, the patience and forbearance, the gentleness and sympathy, the mutual friendliness, affection, love.

What is more, there is the human need out of which religion has grown, the need for contact with the eternally real, for the principles of right over every human relationship. Without this divine reference I do not know how the best human relationships can be realized. Our attitude to others takes on a deeper meaning when we come to reverence them as children of God. We realize our highest mutual good when our friendliness and affection become linked with the eternally real.

Let us, then, have houses; but love alone can build a home. Let us have machines; but reverence for human values as divine can alone establish an enduring civilization. Let us have healthy bodies and busy hands; but only in fellowship with the Father can we construct a self not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

ROWLAND GRAY-SMITH
(New North Church, Hingham, Mass.)

The Purpose of Freedom

"Freedom is not a value in itself. It is good only because it provides opportunity to achieve values. Man's sane desire is not to be an anarchist in his world, destroying in order to demonstrate his freedom; but rather it is to achieve the good. . . . The wise and good man is he who sees his life as an integral part of all life for all time, and who lives by that vision."

ARTHUR E. MORGAN

I Believe

(Personal Statements of Faith from Unitarian Men and Women).

(1) I believe in an Intelligent Creator, capable of loving his creation and desiring our love.

(2) I believe that man has within his soul the seed of immortality, but I do not believe that all men attain it. It is a goal to strive for.

(3) I believe that Jesus came into the world to show us how to live, and know our Father God, along with other great souls of the ages, and to show us that it was possible to live the Life Eternal here and now.

(4) I believe in the worth of all of mankind, that human personality is the precious fruit of a long evolution.

(5) Lastly, I believe in the Church as an instrument of service to mankind, and a light in the dark world to point the way.

MRS. ALLISON R. DORSEY

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